

Southwest Fisheries Science Center  
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April 4, 2003      F/SWC

MEMORANDUM FOR:    Southwest Fisheries Science Center Staff

FROM:                    Michael F. Tillman

SUBJECT:                Southwest Fisheries Science Center Safety Management Program

While the Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWC) has a relatively good safety record, we can ill afford the personal losses, as well as the direct and hidden costs of accidents or injuries, and should not be complacent about safety issues. Last year, in response to several serious accidents within NOAA, I directed that SWC supervisors review all safety protocols for our field and shipboard activities. While I was gratified by the immediate response and feedback provided, I remain concerned that we do not have a Center-wide safety program that explicitly accounts for safety concerns in all aspects of our workday lives.

Consequently, I am pleased to announce that the SWC has selected Marty Nelson to be our new Safety Officer. I look forward to working with Marty and having him help me develop and implement the SWC's Safety Management Program. I request that you cooperate with him in his new job and, as a first step, urge SWC leadership to complete the mandatory Dupont safety training courses being offered. While we do not manufacture potentially dangerous substances like Dupont, staff members nonetheless work in the field or aboard ships in inherently precarious situations, or handle or store potentially hazardous materials in our laboratories. So, Dupont's lessons learned will provide background about why and how we should work together to make safety a central concern.

As a second step in developing a Safety Management Program and until such time as NOAA/NMFS articulate an appropriate policy, we will adopt the following as the Center's ***Safety Policy***:

***We will not undertake any office, laboratory or field activity unless we can do so safely and in an environmentally sound manner.***

We will also adopt the attached ***Safety Principles*** to help guide us in our efforts to work together to create a safe work environment within all of the SWC's facilities, at sea and in the field. I am committed to doing so and request everyone's help in developing and implementing our Safety Management Program. I also wish to emphasize that staff at all levels are empowered, and expected, to report safety issues or concerns to their supervisors.

## ***Southwest Fisheries Science Center Safety Principles***

- ***All injuries can be prevented.*** Even if an accident occurs, we should analyze it to find out what went wrong and how it can be fixed.
- ***Employee involvement is essential.*** Employees not only can identify problems but also can help find solutions.
- ***Management is responsible for preventing injuries.*** Center leadership is directly responsible for developing and implementing the Center safety management program.
- ***All safety incidents must be reported immediately.*** This will allow Center leadership to ensure that all appropriate actions are taken to deal speedily with the situation and to quickly fix the problem.
- ***Working safely is a condition of employment.*** All employees, from the Science Director on down and including contractors, are expected to follow the requirements of the Center safety management program.
- ***All operating exposures can be safeguarded.*** The risks of inherently hazardous laboratory and field activities can and should be reduced to the lowest possible levels.
- ***Management audits are a must.*** Supervisors at all levels are expected to undertake periodic spot checks to ensure that the requirements of the Center safety management program are being followed.
- ***Training employees to work safely is essential.*** New employees need to be brought up to speed on the Center's safety expectations and requirements, and current employees need to be reminded and updated.
- ***Prevention of injuries is good business.*** A small investment in safety is more than worth the loss of the contributions of a good, satisfied and productive employee.